

Redesigning the Freshman English Syllabus: A Pedagogy of Process and Transformation

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Abstract

Freshman English (FE) is a key course in the English Language Institute (ELI) program at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS). However, due to important changes in the global view of English and understanding of the nature of communication itself, faculty and staff in the ELI worked in collaboration to thoroughly reimagine and redesign the FE syllabus as part of wider program reform. In this paper, we describe the rationale for changing the program at KUIS and shifting our thinking away from the dominant communicative language teaching approach. The evolving, decidedly hybrid framework that we have used to redesign the FE course, is founded on philosophical principles derived from sociocultural theory, social semiotics, and multiliteracies. The process-based approach that promotes learner awareness and an individualized, retrospective syllabus, is also explained.

1. Introduction

Our purpose in writing this paper is to document the rationale, principles, and organization of the new Freshman English (FE) syllabus, a key course in the English Language Institute (ELI) program at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS). Starting in April 2011, members of the FE Committee within the ELI have been involved in a collaborative process of reviewing, reimagining, and redesigning the FE syllabus, the results of which are described herein. It is hoped that this discussion will

provide institutional memory with regard to the rationale for change as well serve as a guide for current and future lecturers involved in the teaching of this course. The new FE syllabus is intended to support and guide instructors from a wide variety of backgrounds working with a broad range of students. It is a process syllabus that provides students with mediational tools through the development of communicative-sociocognitive skills. The theoretical underpinnings of this approach can be traced through the work of Bruner (1960), through Stenhouse (1975), to Breen and Candlin (1980), to the New London Group (1996) and Kramsch (2006) as well as Vygotsky's theorizing of the relationship between the cognitive and the social as seen in the recent work of Lantolf and Thorne (2006), amongst others. The original FE course was developed and further expanded as a materials-design research project between 1996 and 2010, and the approach and outline of that work has been documented elsewhere (e.g., Marshall & Torpey, 1997; Ford & Torpey, 1998). The course was originally designed as a response to a particular context in both Japanese education and the field of applied linguistics, within the then-dominant paradigm of communicative language teaching (CLT). To briefly summarize, FE embodied the principles of learner-centered practice and language learning through social interaction. The overarching goal was the development of spoken proficiency in learners who had come through a Japanese high school system mainly characterized by an instructor-centered, grammar translation methodology. Equally importantly, and in keeping with the educational ideals of Dr. Francis C. Johnson (see Johnson and Paulston, 1976, for an overview) who set up the ELI program, development of learner self-awareness and promotion of self-directed learning for students was central. It was originally intended that individuals would be able to forge their own learning path through the course.

2. The Need for Change

It is important to acknowledge the success of FE in establishing principles of learner development and involvement in different discourses as foundational principles within the KUIS program. However, changes in the demographics of Japanese education, in the broader Japanese and global cultures, and in technology, as well as advances in applied linguistics research and thinking about foreign language education, has meant that the FE course was, as of 2011, urgently in need of redesign. In short, the new realities of globalization and multicultural societies that are now emerging (Appadurai, 2001), partly on account of new technology, mean that language programs and pedagogies must seek to develop linguistic abilities that far exceed the goals of the previously dominant models of communicative competence as realized in the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. According to Appadurai (2001, p. 5), globalization can be characterized as a “world of flows,” by which he refers to the dynamic movement of “ideas, ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques” around the world. These “flows” mean that old certainties about language, culture, and communication no longer hold. English, for example, no longer clearly “belongs” to native speakers from stable cultural backgrounds. Indeed, the so-called “Food, festivals and famous men” orientation (Coehlo, 1998) towards understanding and sharing cultural differences through language, exemplified by the CLT ideal of the “native speaker,” is simply no longer viable if we hope to prepare our learners for active participation in diverse global contexts. The overarching goal of CLT was development of functional language use in culturally generic contexts, an idea which is at odds with recent theoretical understandings of communication, as well as language itself, within the foreign language education field. For example, Kramsch (2006) in reviewing present practices in tertiary educational contexts, decries what has become of the original ambitious agenda of CLT:

Not only has communicative competence become reduced to its spoken modality, but it has often been taken as an excuse largely to do away with grammar and to remove much of the instructional responsibility from the instructor who becomes a mere facilitator of group and pair work in conversational activities. (p.250)

This critique captures some of the important issues in the FE course as of October, 2011, when the revision process began. The overarching premise of the course, then, is one that has had to be redefined in light of the increasingly technology-driven nature of the Japanese and global economic and social contexts. Again, referring to Kramsch (2006):

It is no longer appropriate to give students a tourist-like competence to exchange information with native speakers of national languages within well-defined national cultures. They need a much more sophisticated competence in the manipulation of symbolic systems. Hence the renewed attention to discourse in a range of modalities (spoken, written, visual, electronic), the focus on semiotic choice, and the ability to interpret meanings from discourse features. (p.251)

As Kramsch suggests here, language programs suffer when language itself is abstracted out of meaningful cultural and academic contexts to be taught as a system primarily for the everyday exchange of interpersonal information. The need for such a paradigm shift in language education as Kramsch alludes to can be traced back to technology-driven changes in the way communication itself is being realized in social contexts. Kress (2003) has convincingly argued that in the current global media age, a revolution in meaning construction and communication has taken place. Kress and others (e.g., see Hull & Nelson, 2005) have been concerned with describing the range of representational and communicational modes involved in communicating meaning through image,

animated movement, and interactive written and spoken texts. It is this expanded kind of textual awareness that defines the new “sophisticated competence,” described above, that informs the new direction of FE.

3. The New Model: *Awareness, Interaction, and Multiliteracies*

Stenhouse (1975, p. 4) usefully defines a curriculum as “an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal.” For a language program, those essential principles and features must include an understanding of what language is, how it can best be learned, and how that knowledge translates into practice. The AIM curriculum lays out three interrelated, guiding concepts that help to shape the processes of teaching and learning for FE:

3.1. Awareness

Benson (2011) defines learner autonomy as “the capacity to take control of one’s own learning” (p. 58), the first stage in the development of which is heightened awareness of self as a learner (Scharle & Szabó, 2000), an idea that resonates strongly with the approach taken by Frank Johnson at the outset of FE development. For Johnson and Paulson (1976), taking control meant the ability to design and shape one’s own learning experience, having developed the necessary awareness to make meaningful choices about what is the most effective path through a program. In FE, this kind of awareness is crucial and drives the process of feedback, reflection, and response that is integral to the course, particularly in the writing of the Learning Overview, as described below. In reimagining the FE syllabus, we are also concerned with metalinguistic knowledge and awareness. As Matthiessen (2006) states, “learning a language can increasingly be helped by learning about this language – not only passively, but also actively by investigating it and by developing one’s own resources for learning”

(p.33). The selection of course content focusing on different text and rhetoric types provides a way into the exploration of how language functions in different rhetorical contexts and reflects Halliday's (1978) distinctions between three different metafunctions of language: textual, interpersonal, and ideational. We seek to foster the development of learners with the awareness of not only language itself but also how its use is shaped by social contexts. In turn, we hope that this awareness will lead to agency, by which we mean that learners will develop "an understanding of the potentials of the resources of communication" and will be able to "act transformationally on the resources of the environment and thereby on self" (Kress; 2005, p. 20). This reflective component is important as it allows learners to develop the necessary tools to think and talk about language, text, and discourse.

3.2. Interaction

FE remains the only course in the ELI English Department program where learners focus primarily on spoken interaction. Promotion of different types of interaction, including face-to-face conversation and discussion, remain a crucial aspect of the new FE course. We recognize that this is important in creating and maintaining the affective strengths of the program. In short, students generally enjoy interacting with their classmates in multiple ways. As van Lier (1996) cogently states, however, a broad view of interaction is necessary, and we should avoid enacting a focus on interaction in terms of what he describes as "a rather shallow and trivial meaning of social interaction in which talk is glorified for the sake of talk, rather than for the minds it opens up and worlds it connects" (p.148). This broader view of interaction fosters a degree of interdependence in which individuals are co-dependent on key aspects of their learning ecology--classmates, instructors, advisors, classroom materials, and other online resources--for their own language and academic development. In short, interaction is a

key part of the teaching/learning process but we think of interaction differently from the CLT approach where speaking, reading, and writing were often seen as platforms for practicing target forms. The approach we are implementing in FE focuses on language use, or “the interpretation and creation of meaning created through texts and the language forms used to express that meaning” (Paesani, Willis Allen, & Dupuy, 2015, p. 36). This focus on interpretation and the creation of meaning shifts our focus away from language *per se* and forces us to consider the way that language is implicated in social and cultural meaning making and communicative activity.

3.3. Multiliteracies

The multiliteracies framework, as described by the New London Group (1996), does not speak directly to foreign language education, though it has provided a key theoretical framework in a number of contexts for second and foreign language programs (e.g., Kern, 2000; Paesani, Willis Allen, & Dupuy, 2014). As described by the New London Group (1996), the central aim of the multiliteracies project is, firstly, “to account for the context of our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalized societies” and, secondly, to account for “the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies” (p. 60). These two strands of the framework are clearly related because “the proliferation of communication channels and media support and extend cultural and subcultural diversity” (ibid, p. 60). The FE proposal outlined here seeks to integrate multimodal textual analysis and language awareness with the communicative interests and experiences of our students. Specifically, the use of authentic texts that are relevant to the interests of learners can become an increasingly important element in the course, provided we equip our learners with some basic analytic tools, such as those from discourse analysis, to mediate understanding and production of such texts.

4. A Process-Based Approach to the Language Syllabus

In a fixed-input syllabus, the focus is on producing high-quality materials that all instructors use in more or less the same way. This approach can be effective if the experience and skills of the teaching staff are limited; however, it is not appropriate if the staff is professional and experienced, nor if training and development routes are institutionally available. In programs that include learners with very different levels of proficiency on entrance, a “one-size fits all” approach can also be problematic. In the ELI context, we also need to account for the different backgrounds, interests, and styles of the diverse teaching staff. This diversity can be a real strength for the institution if the best use is made of difference, but it can also be a source of friction if different approaches are not valued.

In contrast, in an outcome-optimizing syllabus, the focus is on students identifying the best ways to improve their knowledge and literacies within a given framework, in collaboration with both peers and an instructor. This “process approach” to education is hardly new and is salient in both the Montessori (2013) and Reggio Emilia (see Edwards, 1993) philosophies of learning. In foreign language education, we can trace the process approach back to the work of Stenhouse (1975), who advocated curriculum design that foregrounded the development of the conditions for learning ahead of the actual content of the program. An important characteristic of the syllabus proposed by Breen and Candlin (1980) is that, rather than a planned set of materials, it is an infrastructure, with the instructor no longer pre-selecting content, but providing a framework for learners to create their own negotiated work plan in the classroom (Breen, 1987), thus allowing for different and changing abilities, different learning needs, and individual learner identities and life trajectories. The framework approach means that there is no need to specify particular content, methodology, or even grammar (*ibid*). A process approach is, therefore, dependent on collaboration and negotiation. While underscoring the value of

an individualized experience for learners within the same class, it is "a social and problem-solving orientation, with explicit provision for the expression of individual learning styles and preferences" (Long & Crookes, 1993, p. 33). If the organization and content of a course were left completely open, it would be an impossible task for the instructor to negotiate and re-negotiate goals and objectives throughout the course, even with our slightly reduced class size of 20. Within the AIM framework, the FE syllabus deals with this issue by focusing on six broadly defined language-learning processes in recurring cycles of work. The processes have been selected and defined through a deconstruction of the original course, in combination with theoretical and empirical analyses of classroom work.

5. Principle into Practice: The New Freshman English Course

5.1 Syllabus structure

The Freshman English course meets for 90-minute classes four times a week and runs from April to February. The year is split into two 15-week semesters, each of which comprises three learning cycles referred to as "units." At the simplest level, each unit consists of six familiar activity types, referred to as "core processes," which are used to build projects that are defined by a principal rhetoric type. Following Kalantzis and Cope (2012), we define knowledge or learning processes quite simply as "foundational types of thinking-in-action...things you can do to know" (p. 356). The importance of realigning our approach to language education on processes, rather than strictly on structural, notional, or functional aspects of language itself, is to allow us to align our program with, and respond to, the contemporary conditions for meaning making in the new media age. Throughout the year, we want students to engage with making meaning in four different rhetorical modes. This work provides cohesion within the course and

also prepares students for related work in other ELI courses in years 1 and 2. The year begins with a five-week Introduction Unit that serves as a needs analysis and a first attempt at each of the core processes. There is no final project in this period as each week is treated as a mini-project, thus giving students the opportunity to work closely with all their classmates and start to build the class community. In each subsequent unit, previous attempts at core processes are referred back to, building a cycle of action, reflection, and development. These later units, lasting four to five weeks, revolve around topics negotiated between the instructor and students. The final two weeks of the year in January are used as a meta-level review of the entire course.

5.3 Core processes

We were also able to build on the existing strengths of the previous version of the course through the extended discussion and self-analysis processes, as they derive from activities already developed (see Stillwell et al., 2010). The six core processes introduced in turn in the Orientation unit, are as follows:

1. **Self-analysis:** The students use self-analysis as an opportunity to analyze an area of concern in their own learning (e.g. vocabulary, grammar, turn-taking, pronunciation, etc.) of their own choosing. For example, if they want to investigate their use of gesture, they can analyze a video of a recent presentation. If they want to examine turn-taking during a conversation, they can use an audio recording of a conversation on the unit theme, transcribe it, and reflect on strengths and weaknesses.
2. **Audio-Visual Interpretation:** During this process students examine audio or visual texts and frame this examination using different modes of communication. For example, students might look at a TV commercial and identify how sound and music are used to

convey meaning. Students can also look at a segment of video and highlight new language that is of interest to their own communication needs. Different tools will be introduced by instructors to facilitate this analysis.

3. **Data Analysis:** This process is concerned with data and how that data might be analyzed and used to support a point of view. For example, students can carry out a class survey based on a topic they are studying and practice representing and extrapolating meaning from the outcomes. After the analysis, the conclusions can contribute toward a culminating project at the end of the unit.

4. **Extended Interaction:** For this process, each student typically leads a 10-to-20-minute discussion based on a text that he or she has sourced and which is related to the topic being covered in the unit. Students learn to extract key words and points from the text, which can then be related to the other students in a small group. The students also compose discussion questions based on the text.

5. **Communication Strategies:** The students examine how different strategies can be employed for effective communication. For example, the students might take a complex scientific process, such as the process for cloning a sheep, and decide how best to convey the concepts to a particular audience in a given context. This process can often be used as a planning stage for a presentation project.

6. **Problem Solving:** Students discuss and consider options for solving a problem. The problems can range from social to personal to linguistic. For example, during a unit on the environment students might have the opportunity to discuss local, international, and world environmental concerns. The process could equally be turned inward to fix a

problem arising in class.

The FE syllabus can then said to be retrospective (Candlin, 1984) in that it is only at the end of the year that the full contents of the course can be seen, and no two classes will ever share the same materials or learning affordances.

5.2 Management of learning

A key benefit of the simple syllabus framework of learning processes and projects is the redefinition of the place of learning in FE, bringing it back to a central concept of self-directed learning. The choices concerning the ways that processes are realized over the year is unique to each class group and, particularly later in the year, will also vary widely within each group. The record of activity, reflections, and achievements builds into a retrospective syllabus (Candlin, 1984) of the different realizations of the processes and the projects. Students manage their learning through a Learning Overview consisting of a summary/journal of their work, a profile of themselves as learners (including a record of goals and achievements), and a development record based on reflections at the end of each unit. The content and form of the overview will vary significantly according to the level of students and individual needs. In some cases, the Overview operates as an independent study plan based around goals; other students prefer a more discursive narrative approach; students of lower linguistic proficiency may need more structured or guided formats. The actual form will vary considerably between students and diverge over the year, as should be expected since this is a key element to self-direction. Management of learning is made explicit through the framework of processes and reflections. The students are aware of the short- and long-term purposes of all of the activities conducted in the course and are given significant choice in both what is done and how. Similarly, the instructor has a higher level of decision-making

responsibility, judging when to allow free choice, to what degree, and when to limit choice or recommend particular directions for individuals and for the class as a whole.

6. From Process to Project

Each unit of content work culminates with a project, meaning that throughout the year, students will undertake five different projects. Each of these projects should be defined by a focus on a different rhetorical mode, which we describe in detail below. Each of the processes has the potential to be realized as a stand-alone task. They become most effective, however, as they become integrated into the larger scheme of the unit project. In this way, we move away from limited concepts such as learning skills, into engaging deeper cognitive skills that are more fitting in tertiary education contexts. The long-term aim of the course is development of the core processes, and the projects are evidence of developing processes, in a sense, the fruit demonstrating the health of the vine. Projects provide a broad discourse context for investigating different topics. Whereas communicative language teaching tended to focus on interpersonal uses of language, a processes and projects structure allows extension to a focus on ideational and textual uses and functions of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). This extending is realized by asking students to discuss topics in cultural and theoretical terms and consider the social and textual nature of communication itself through consideration of rhetoric types and genre. This cycle of exploration emphasizes the fact that any given topic can be constituted and described by different discourses, ranging from the familiar and the everyday to the scientific and abstract. Indeed, expanding a learners' lexicogrammatical repertoire of resources for meaning making in this way is how language acquisition is defined from a functional perspective (Matthiessen, 2006).

6.1 Purposes of projects

It is helpful in planning a unit of work in the syllabus to consider the purpose of each project and to be strategic in thinking about the relationship between the content of the process work and the culminating project work. The functions of the projects are as follows:

1. Give a tangible and measurable outcome to core processes.
2. Motivate investigation into topics, thus generating language for study.
3. Motivate investigation into different academic and cultural perspectives.
4. Facilitate analysis of genre, rhetoric, and discourse.

6.2 Planning a project

The whole class group should adopt a broad topic for each unit, but sub-topics can and should be different according to preference or perceived need. The genre may also vary within practical limitations. For example, when dealing with the argumentation mode, some students may be interested in a formal or panel debate, whereas others may prefer to present their analysis of opposing viewpoints in a less confrontational presentation. It is also entirely feasible for argumentation to be represented dramatically or through a storyboard, allowing for a range of projects that still explore the same way of meaning making. Units taught early in the year will generally be guided more by the instructor's choice, and then later on, students ought to start taking more control of their learning. However, the instructor may also take executive decisions to ensure that students deal with a wide range of text types and literacies. Students tend to choose social and media topics, but experience gained through development of the syllabus shows that students respond very well to "difficult" topics such as science, poetry, history, etc.

6.2.1 Rhetoric types

Rhetorical modes constitute general patterns of language organization strategically used by authors/writers as linguistic resources in the creation of specific genres (Meurer, 2002). In short, different rhetorical modes are important socially constructed ways of making and understanding textual meaning. Having learners interact with and work towards control of rhetorical mode, through the project stage of FE, is seen therefore as a useful way of structuring learner progress through the syllabus, leading to a broad experience with texts and meaning making. Rhetorical mode unifies texts, whereas other category options that were considered (e.g., genre, topic, communicative mode) diversify them (Meurer, 2002). That is to say that a very wide range of texts can be categorized under only the four rhetoric “modes” or types. The rhetoric types thus allow for groups of students to be working on a project with the same way of making meaning (e.g., description) but still allows for diversity of actual project work that can be negotiated between the instructor and students. The rhetorical modes are described in further detail in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary Definitions of Rhetoric Types for Project Work in FE

Rhetoric Type	Description	Examples
Exposition	Information is explained to the listener. Text is presented as accurate, fair, and clear. The rhetorical appeals to the reader are explicitly to ethos and logos.	Presentation (Slide Show)
Description	The text evokes a representation in the listener’s mind. It consists of metaphoric and/or modal transformation (e.g., a spoken description of a painting transforms a visual experience to the oral mode) and may attempt to convey emotional experience, technical details, etc., depending on particular purpose.	Presentation (Poster)

Narration	Ideas are expressed as some kind of story. Text is concerned with agents and their roles in the causes and outcomes of events. Time and space are significant in ways that may be absent from other text types.	Folk tales Readers' Theatre
Argumentation	A central concept is given with supporting evidence. Text is concerned with the connections and interrelationships between concepts. Appeals are made to logos, ethos, and pathos.	Environment Debate
Mixed	The focus is on the communicative power of and movement between the different rhetoric types.	Travel Fair

The examples in Table 1 above, give simple and familiar matches between rhetoric type, genre, and topic. It is also possible to choose combinations that encourage creativity. Students might tend towards explaining cultural history in a dry expository manner, for example, but a project can be made more challenging by setting the rhetoric type as narrative. The result then is a transformative project in which students research the history of an aspect of culture but demonstrate their understanding of it through storytelling. Similarly, an understanding of a scientific discovery might be better demonstrated through a description of how it would have been experienced by people at the time, rather than direct explanation. Turning that around, topics that risk being treated superficially can be transformed, for example, by developing an exposition project in which a Disney movie or a pop band is presented as a business model, and so on.

8. The Final Puzzle Piece: Assessment

As FE has been taught without interruption even as the curriculum renewal process has gradually been implemented, the course learning outcomes until now have presented a moving target. Compounding this difficulty, a number of historical issues with respect

to grading policy in the ELI, although previously addressed, have never been satisfactorily resolved. Consequently, the assessment component of the new FE curriculum, in simultaneously trying to take all these factors into consideration, is still in its initial stages. Since 1999-2000, the ELI has used a battery of in-house tests to stream incoming students into tiers. One issue with streaming, however, has been that of grade distribution. Differences in individual teachers' interpretations of the purposes and significance of grades aside, it has been hard for some instructors to accept that fewer students, if any, might earn the highest possible grade at the end of the course. In April 2004, the university responded by instituting a grade of A+, intended to be an elite grade for the purpose of distinguishing students truly deserving of scholarships and other achievement-based rewards. However, in the absence of any clear grading criteria, teachers have still been left either to decide their own, which almost always reflect relative abilities within classes, or to grade on a curve. In either case, good students in the lower tiers have thus had an almost certain advantage with respect to final grades.

Understandably, teachers want to encourage students who work hard to continue to do so even if they do not improve as much or perform as well as some of their classmates. As such, the first step in devising a more appropriate evaluation system was to identify criteria in two broad categories: *effort* and *achievement*. In this way, it is easy to imagine students who work hard earning higher grades than students who do not, students who perform better earning higher grades than those who perform less well, and students who both work hard and perform well earning the highest grades of all. Moreover, as not all high-performing students work hard and not all hard-working students perform well, a standardized criterion-referenced system should produce a reasonable distribution of grades within classes of every tier. The second step in this process was to specify exactly what is meant by "effort" and "achievement." As for effort, it was decided that the only reliable measure was time on task. Students are

expected to complete an average of 30 minutes of homework for every lesson. As such, one semester comprises 120 hours of study, and one absence would amount to 120 minutes of missed work, which may or may not be made up, according to standard policies too detailed to explain here. As for achievement, we have tentatively outlined a number of learning outcomes representing the three main foci of our program, namely awareness, interaction, and multiliteracies.

The third step in this process has been to describe the range of possible student performances with regard to the target outcomes in terms of exceeding, meeting, approaching, or not approaching a set of provisional standards that are still under development but based on the proficiency bands of the Common European Framework of Reference, or CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). The next step will then be to match the target learning outcomes with the rhetoric types in the various units and prescribe corresponding performance assessments. At that point, standardized rubrics will be developed and compared against samples of previous student work so that course instructors can be trained to fairly and consistently evaluate their own classes.

Unfortunately, space limitations do not allow for a description of the proposed method for combining evaluations on individual objectives within the performance assessments to produce overall project grades. The same is true for the envisaged synthesis of overall effort and achievement evaluations into a single composite course grade. Suffice it to say, however, that we hope to ensure that all students are held accountable for obtaining the same skills in all sections of the course across the entire program and that everyone is evaluated by the same standards.

9. Conclusion

FE remains the cornerstone course of the ELI program and is taught to incoming students with a wide range of proficiencies and experiences. In this paper, we have

described some of the rationale for change and described the theoretical motivation and underpinnings of the new version of the course. The process-based approach, informed by a multiliteracies pedagogy, offers an innovative response to the particular and complex ecology of our context at KUIS. Given the global flow of culture, knowledge, and languages in and through all manner of digital and multimodal texts, and the multiple allegiances and identities that shape the use of English as a World language, we see this as a timely pedagogical response to a rapidly changing world. It is envisaged that this new version of the course will be taught across the KUIS curriculum from April 2017. A research-based approach to understanding the strengths, weaknesses, and efficacy of the new syllabus will inform any future developments.

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